

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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O R 020950Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

INFO DEPT OF TREASURY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

SECSTATE WASHDC 4013

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHABI 0553

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : OVIP (SIMON. WILLIAM E)

SUBJECT: BACKGROUND ON UAE OFFICIALS FOR SIMON VISIT

1. SECRETARY SIMON HAS UNDOUBTEDLY ALREADY BEEN PROVIDED WITH BASIC BIODATA ON KEY OFFICIALS HE WILL BE MEETING HERE. WE SUBMIT FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ABOUT THE PERSONALITIES OF THESE MEN AND ROLE THEY ARE CURRENTLY PLAYING IN UAE POWER HIERARCHY.

2. SECRETARY WILL FIND SHAIKH ZAYED AN INTELLIGENT AND AGREEABLE MAN. HIS TENDENCY TOWARD VERBAL PLATITUDES, SOMETIMES DELIVERED IN A RATHER PONTIFICAL MANNER, SHOULD NOT LEAD ONE TO UNDERESTIMATE HIS NATIVE INTELLIGENCE. A RULER OF THE TRADITIONAL ARAB BEDOUIN STAMP, HE POSSESSES BOTH WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTHS ASSOCIATED WITH THIS TYPE. HIS STRENGTH IS THAT HE IS AN ASTUTE PRACTITIONER OF TRIBAL FAMILY POLITICS, WHICH IS STILL THE BASIS OF POLITICAL POWER HERE, AND AT THE SAME TIME HAS WELCOMED AND ENCOURAGED HIS COUNTRY'S HEADLONG PLUNGE INTO THE MODERNISM OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. HOWEVER, BOTH IN TERMS OF TEMPERAMENT AND WORK HABITS, HE IS VERY MUCH OF THE OLD TRIBAL SCHOOL. HE LIKES TO TALK TO SADAT ABOUT THE ARAB-ISRAEL PROBLEM AND TO HIS TOWN PLANNERS ABOUT THE LAY-OUT OF ABU DHABI CITY SPACES, BUT HE HAS LITTLE PATIENCE WITH THE AREA IN BETWEEN--
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DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEMATICALLY, MAKING HIS MINISTRIES

RUN PROPERLY, BUILDING A BODY OF LAW AND REGULATIONS FOR PROPER REGULATION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY, ETC. IT IS PRECISELY THIS REQUIREMENT FOR ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP THAT BECOMES EVER MORE DEMANDING AS UAE'S ECONOMIC BOOM PROCEEDS, AND IT IS HERE THAT ZAYED'S LACK OF LEADERSHIP IS MOST KEENLY FELT.

3. ZAYED IS CONVINCED INTERNATIONALIST AND GENUINELY ADMIRING OF US ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN ATTEMPTING TO CREATE NEW MECHANISMS FOR COOPERATION ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. WE BELIEVE SECRETARY SHOULD BUILD ON THIS ASSET IN OUR RELATIONS BY SPENDING SOME TIME REVIEWING FOR ZAYED ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE AND OUR FUTURE OBJECTIVES WITH RESPECT TO INITIATIVES LAUNCHED AT UN SPECIAL SESSION, CIEC, JAMAICA CONFERENCE, AND IFAD. LIKE ALL RULERS, ZAYED WILL BE FLATTERED IF HE IS LEFT FEELING SECRETARY HAS TAKEN HIM INTO HIS CONFIDENCE ON THESE GLOBAL PROBLEMS, AND EVEN MORE SO, IF WE CAN INDICATE WE ARE LOOKING TO HIM TO PLAY SPECIAL ROLE IN CERTAIN SPECIFIC AREAS TO HELP US BUILD SUCH FRAMEWORK.

4. IN HIS MEETING WITH SHAIKH ZAYED WE BELIEVE SECRETARY SHOULD GO OVER FULL RANGE OF SUBJECTS WE INTEND TO RAISE HERE BUT NOT GO INTO TOO MUCH DETAIL ON ANY ONE OF THEM. THIS WILL BEST BE DONE IN MEETINGS WITH MINISTERS WHO HAVE GREATER KNOWLEDGE OF THESE INDIVIDUAL SUBJECTS.

5. FOREIGN MINISTER SUWAIDI IS ZAYED'S CLOSEST AND MOST RESPECTED ADVISOR. HE IS NEAREST THING THIS COUNTRY HAS TO A PRIME MINISTER. PAST YEAR HE HAS DETACHED HIMSELF TO GREAT EXTENT FROM FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO CONCENTRATE ON HELPING ZAYED STRENGTHEN FEDERAL AUTHORITY. HE IS ON VIRTUALLY EVERY POLICY-MAKING COMMITTEE--ABU DHABI EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, INVESTMENT CORPORATION, ABU DHABI NATIONAL OIL COMPANY BOARD, ETC. SUWAIDI IS THUS KEY MAN IN UAE NOT ONLY IN GETTING POLICY AGREEMENT BUT IN RIDING HERD ON MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES TO GET PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED. HE HAS SPREAD HIMSELF TOO THIN RECENTLY, AND HAS NOT BEEN RESOURCEFUL IN BUILDING UP A STAFF OF COMPETENT PEOPLE TO HELP HIM, WITH RESULT THAT HIS LEADERSHIP IS FELT ONLY SPASMODICALLY. HE NEVERTHELESS IS SINGLE MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON IN UAE IN TERMS OF GETTING ANYTHING STARTED OR CARRIED THROUGH TO COMPLETION. ALTHOUGH
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EMOTIONALLY AN ARAB NATIONALIST, SUWAIDI IS ALSO HIGHLY PRAGMATIC IN HIS OUTLOOK AND HAS BEEN FRIENDLY TOWARD THE U.S.

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6. OTHER MINISTERS AND/OR ADVISORS DO NOT COME CLOSE TO SUWAIDI IN TERMS OF OVERALL INFLUENCE. OTAIBA SPENDS TOO MUCH TIME OUT OF COUNTRY AND IS NOT TENACIOUS IN PURSUING HIS OWN ROLE HERE. AS RESULT, IN OIL AFFAIRS, HE HAS STEADILY LOST GROUND TO ALGERIANS IN ADNOC, NONE OF WHOM ARE POPULAR WITH LOCALS BUT WHO HAVE EXPANDED THEIR INFLUENCE BECAUSE THEY WORK HARD AND KNOW THEIR BUSINESS. OTAIBA NEVERTHELESS IS ALSO ON MOST POLICY-MAKING COMMITTEES AND WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE VOICE IN MANY AREAS OUTSIDE PETROLEUM. HABROUSH, MINISTER OF STATE FOR FINANCIAL AFFAIRS, IS ONE OF ABU DHABI'S MOST COMPETENT YOUNG MEN. IN 1974 HE SEEMED DESTINED TO BE ONE OF KEY PEOPLE IN UAE, BUT LAST YEAR HE WENT INTO SLUMP, SPENDING LONG PERIODS OUT OF COUNTRY, AND UNLIKE HIS RELATIVE SUWAIDI, REFUSING TO REMAIN ENGAGED WHEN THE FRUSTRATIONS OF OPERATING UNDER ZAYED'S ARBITRARY AND UNSYSTEMATIC LEADERSHIP BECAME TOO GREAT.

7. SHAIKH SOROOR (WHO MAY OR MAY NOT BE PRESENT AT MEETINGS WITH SECRETARY) IS, AMONG SHAIKH ZAYED'S RELATIVES WHO ARE IN GOVERNMENT POSITIONS, THE YOUNGEST AND BY FAR THE BEST. AS WITH SUWAIDI, ZAYED HAS GIVEN SOROOR TOO MUCH TO DO, AND AS RESULT HIS LEADERSHIP IN ANY ONE AREA IS NOT FELT AS MUCH AS IT COULD BE. HE IS CHIEF OF ZAYED'S DIWAN, HEAD OF ABU DHABI WATER AND ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT, HEAD OF ADFAED, MEMBER OF THE INVESTMENT CORPORATION BOARD,
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AND HAS BEEN GIVEN SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS WELL FOR MANAGEMENT OF SHAIKH ZAYED'S PERSONAL INVESTMENTS. BECAUSE OF VARIETY OF HIS FUNCTIONS WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIM INCLUDED IN TALKS WITH SECRETARY, BUT WILL LEAVE THIS DECISION BASICALLY UP TO ZAYED AND SUWAIDI.

8. IN GENERAL, LOOKING TO SUCCESS OF SECRETARY SIMON'S VISIT HERE, WE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND THIS IS HIGHLY OVER-WORKED, OVER-STRAINED GOVERNMENT. ITS TOP OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN SO BUSY DEALING WITH INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS, THE PACE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND THE CONSTANT STREAM OF VISITORS TO ABU DHABI, THEY HAVE NOT HAD TIME TO THINK SYSTEMATICALLY ABOUT ANYTHING. CONFRONTED BY PRESSURE SALESMANSHIP, THEY TEND TO SMILE AGREEABLY, WAIT FOR VISITORS TO GET OUT OF TOWN, AND THEN DO NOTHING. MOST EFFECTIVE APPROACH, GIVEN UAEG'S HARRASSED CONDITION, IS TO QUIETLY LAY OUT WHAT WE CAN DO BUT NOT PRESS TOO HARD FOR INSTANTANEOUS RESULTS. UAE LEADERS LIKE TIME TO THINK THINGS OVER BUT THEY WILL EVENTUALLY COME TO US IN RESPONSE TO WORTHWHILE PROPOSALS. STERNER

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